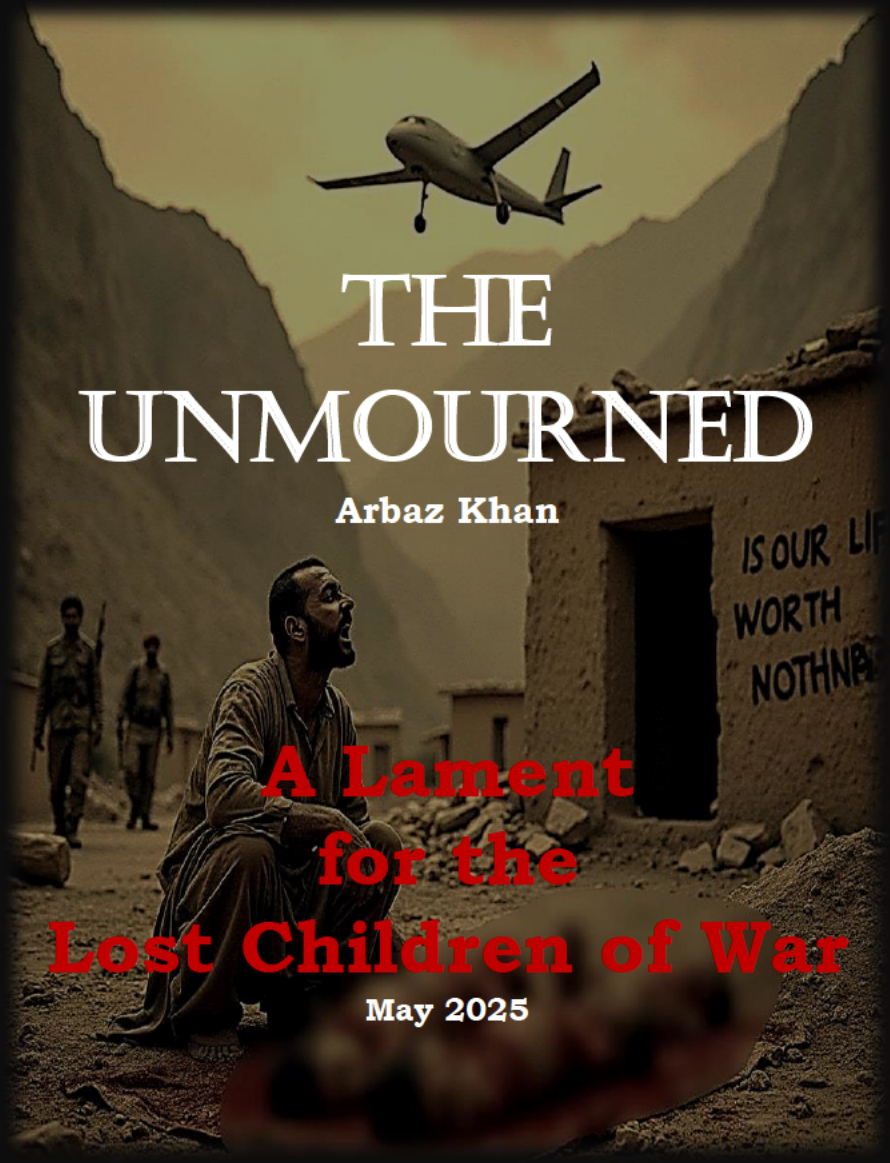

THE UNMOURNED

Arbaz Khan

A Lament for the Lost Children of War

May 2025

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Contents

Prologue	3
From Soviet Toys to Pakistani Drones	5
APS ...Bloodied Schoolbags and the Shadows of Complicity	11
Epilogue	18

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Prologue

Between the cartographer's line and the coroner's report lies a land of ghosts. It is a place where mountains hold the echo of not one war, but many... a palimpsest of scorched earth written over by successive empires. Here, the child is not a citizen in waiting but a permanent casualty, a currency spent in transactions of power he will never comprehend. His story is told in two acts, separated by time, united by the same brutal calculus.

The first is a lament of geography, a chronicle of the Pashtun heartland. It is a tale that begins with the rusted iron of Soviet toys, butterfly mines that promised flight but delivered mutilation, and ascends to the paperless warrants of American drones, their hum the prelude to a carbonized silence. This is the story of a people trapped in the double helix of foreign intervention and domestic betrayal, where graves are dug by the very hands sworn to protect. It is the story of the Unmourned-1: those lost to the grand, cynical games of global powers and their local overseers.

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The second is a lament of institutions, a dissection of the very structures that should symbolize sanctuary. It unfolds in the ringing silence of schoolyards after the gunfire stops, in the splintered fiberglass of a school bus. This story asks not who the enemy is, but why the enemy so often finds the door unlocked from the inside. It traces the blood from Peshawar's prestigious halls to Khuzdar's dusty streets, revealing not a failure of security, but a perversion of purpose. This is the story of the Unmourned-2: those sacrificed to sustain a system that consumes its own future to feed its present.

Together, they form a diptych of despair. One looks out to the horizon, to the foreign master and the complicit general. The other looks inward, to the classroom and the boardroom, to the soldier reprogrammed and the mother digging. They are two verses of the same endless hymn, sung over open wounds.

This is not a history. It is an autopsy of a recurring death.

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From Soviet Toys to Pakistani Drones

https://enamoured.substack.com/p/the-unmourned-a-lament-for-the-lost

Beneath the Hindu Kush's jagged silhouette, where Soviet tank tracks fossilized into the soil and American drones scribble death across the sky, the children of the Pashtuns sleep in graves unnamed. Their remains, scattered between butterfly-shaped mines from the 1980s and the carbonized shadows of 21st-century drone strikes, form a macabre tapestry of endless war.

Since 1979, when Soviet brutality birthed a "lost generation" (1.8 million dead, 1.5 million disabled, 300,000 children among them), the Pashtun heartland has been a theater of calculated carnage. The mujahideen, armed by Islamabad and Washington, metastasized into the Taliban; the Taliban spawned the TTP, who in 2014 turned their guns on the Army Public School in Peshawar, slaughtering 132 children in a hail of bullets and flames.

The arithmetic of suffering is unyielding. In Waziristan's shrapnel-scarred valleys, mothers clutch fragments of their children's bones, casualties of Pakistani airstrikes disguised as counterterrorism. These strikes, ordered by generals who once nurtured the very militants they now target, epitomize a grotesque hypocrisy: a single errant Indian missile sparks outrage, while Pashtun funerals fade into

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silence.

Between 2004 and 2017, U.S. drones killed over 2,000 in Pakistan, many civilians, their deaths dismissed as "anti-state narratives" by a regime complicit in Washington's hegemony. The ruling elite, entrenched in a military-industrial symbiosis, profit from this cycle. Generals ascend to DHA mansions, while Pashtun mothers dig graves with bare hands, their wails drowned by F-16s bought with aid tied to drone basing rights.

The APS massacre, a surgical strike on a military-run school, reeks of orchestrated symbolism. Attackers, foreign nationals, per intelligence reports, knew the layout, evaded checkpoints, and spared officers' children, fueling whispers of false flags to legitimize Operation Zarb-e-Azb. The TTP, nurtured in Pakistan's madrassas and safe-housed in Punjab, mirrors the deep state's playbook: cultivate chaos, then pose as savior. Meanwhile, the Durand Line, a colonial relic, fractures Pashtun kin into pawns of rival states. Afghan Tajiks and Uzbeks, too, are ensnared in ethnonationalist agendas, their struggles amplified by Pan-Turkist or Pan-Persian ambitions.

Survivors of this carnage, APS students, Waziristan's orphans, bear invisible wounds. Studies reveal 75% of APS children suffer PTSD... Post-traumatic stress disorder, their trauma compounded by militarized schoolyards and media sensationalism. In Afghanistan, 400,000 children are war-disabled, their bodies collateral in a game of drones and diplomacy.

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The UN's silence echoes complicity; the war on terror rebrands old oppressions, its architects shielded by geopolitics.

The Silence After the Storm: There will be no justice. No tribunals, no reparations, no reckoning. The architects of this carnage; the Soviet generals, the CIA handlers, the ISI spymasters, the undeserving generals... will die warm in their beds, their memoirs sanitized for history. The Pashtun child, however, remains expendable. His blood oils the gears of geopolitics; his corpse is a stepping stone for careers. The mothers of Waziristan and Peshawar know this truth too well. They have memorized the weight of a child's body in their arms, the way the earth resists the shovel, the exact shade of blue a lifeless lip turns in the cold. They know their sorrow is not a tragedy but a policy outcome.

And so the graveyards swell. The drones return at dusk to hum lullabies of impunity. The school bells ring for ghosts. The world moves on.

When will it end? asks the mother of a boy killed in APS.

The answer is written

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in the flight paths of Reaper drones, in the flight paths charted from Langley to Rawalpindi, in the budget allocations for F-16s, in budgets prioritizing Reapers over reparations and the silence of prime-time news.

It will never end, in news cycles that bury Pashtun grief beneath headlines.

It will never end, not while children remain currency in the economy of empire.

Tail Piece: The Silenced Interlude... Amid the unbroken rhythm of state-sanctioned violence, one dissonant chord still reverberates: the brief era when Imran Khan's premiership halted the drone war's mechanical heartbeat. Between 2018 and 2022, under his government's defiant stance, not a single CIA-operated Reaper stained Pashtun skies; a ceasefire born not of foreign benevolence, but of Khan's refusal to let Pakistani soil remain a graveyard for Pashtun children. He dared to label the drones "a cancer on our sovereignty," publicly severing the Faustian pact that allowed Islamabad to trade Pashtun blood for Washington's dollars. Yet this interlude of respite proved fatal to his rule. The powers vested in perpetual war, the generals who had long profited from America's "War on Terror" largesse, the political dynasties feeding on militarized budgets, orchestrated his ouster through a bizarre late night coup by non-other than a treacherous general, right under the watch and silent node of Supreme Court Of Pakistan; the graveyard of

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dignity, justice and rule of law.

Today, Khan rots in Adiala Jail's death cell, his crime not corruption but resistance: to the CIA's demand for renewed basing rights, to the military's addiction to crisis as legitimacy. His incarceration, timed with India-Pakistan brinkmanship, exposes the calculus of empire: a jailed dissident cannot rally Pashtun mothers mourning drone-struck children or shame generals reviving Taliban proxies. The same generals who now escalate border skirmishes with India; downing drones, parading captured jets, to brazenly burnish their savior myth, even as they auction Pakistan's economy to IMF austerity and its sovereignty to Pentagon strategists.

Khan's tragedy is Pakistan's: a nation shackled to warlords in uniform, their authority resurrected by manufactured wars. The drones have returned, of course; not just American, but Indian and Pakistani, their payloads baptizing a new generation of "militants" in Waziristan's valleys.

The generals, having erased Khan's defiance from history's ledger, now script his epitaph: Here lies the man who believed a nuclear state could choose peace.

Meanwhile, in Rawalpindi's boardrooms, they toast to ceaseless conflict... the only language their hollowed-out republic still understands.

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Resisting the silent siege with a louder hope for tomorrow's Pakistan
...Arbaz Khan
https://enamoured.substack.com

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APS...Bloodied Schoolbags and the Shadows of Complicity

The title implies a sequel to an earlier lament: perhaps for the unheeded warnings, the unchecked extremism, or the decades of spilled blood that led to this moment.

The corridors of Pakistan's history are littered with the broken dreams of children. On December 16, 2014, the Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar became a slaughterhouse. Seven gunmen; foreign mercenaries and local militants, stormed the school, executing 131 students point-blank, and burning teachers alive. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed it as revenge for military operations, but whispers of deeper betrayals lingered: Indian intelligence's fingerprints, CIA-backed destabilization, and rogue elements within Pakistan's own Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) trading Pashtun lives for strengthening their grip on power and geopolitical gains. These generals, seduced by the patronage of global powers, have long bartered sovereignty for survival, auctioning mineral-rich lands in Waziristan's emerald mines, Balochistan's copper veins, and Gilgit's aquamarine deposits to foreign investors while displacing locals under the smokescreen of counterterrorism. The world mourned, but the truth was buried beneath performative hangings and hollow promises.

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Ten winters later, on May 21, 2025, history repeated itself in Khuzdar, Balochistan. A suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into another Army Public School bus, killing nine; six children, the driver, a guard, and the bomber... and

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maiming 53 others, most under 12. The military swiftly blamed India, as it always does, while parents cradled children with "intestines hanging out" and "legs torn apart".

The parallels are grotesque. Both attacks targeted institutions tied to the military, yet the state's narrative remains eerily consistent: external enemies, never internal rot. Behind this façade, the generals' true war is waged not on terror but for control; over Balochistan's Reko Diq gold reserves, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's ruby-laden mountains, and the lithium-rich deserts of Chagai, all now militarized zones where local voices are silenced and foreign consortiums carve open the earth.

After Peshawar, the military's National Action Plan crumbled into theatrics; executions without justice, reforms without accountability. Ehsanullah Ehsan, the TTP spokesman, allegedly walks free in Turkey, while grieving parents clutch faded photos of their sons, still begging for answers. In the case of Khuzdar, the newly appointed Field Marshal Asim Munir, already accused of crushing dissent in Balochistan, presided over a regime that allegedly hushed casualty numbers, just as it silenced critics. Commissioner Hamza Shafqat's visceral hospital account; *kids with splinters in their bodies, fathers who lost all three children...* pierced the state's sanitized rhetoric, exposing a machinery more adept at propaganda than protection.

The military's complicity is not mere conjecture but

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a pattern etched in blood. A video surfacing later shows a voluntary confessional statement by an ex SSG soldier, Mudasar Iqbal, who states that one Major Jawad gave orders to on spot shoot and kill surviving APS students; a claim the ISI likely buried, much like the 2014 security lapses that allowed terrorists to scale school walls unimpeded. The Khuzdar attack, the 25th in Balochistan in a year attributed to "Indian proxies," fits a broader script of hybrid warfare. Yet, as Pakistan accuses India, its own generals collaborate with China in a "full-spectrum alliance," trading sovereignty for technology while Balochistan bleeds. Its coastlines leased for Gwadar's port, its mountains dynamited for rare earth minerals, and its children sacrificed to secure IMF bailouts and Beijing's Belt and Road largesse. The irony is lethal: a nuclear arsenal controlled by "mercenaries" risks compromise, not to foreign bids, but to the generals' insatiable greed.

(Confessional Video)

Balochistan, rich in resources and despair, epitomizes this betrayal. Its people, disenfranchised by rigged elections and military brutality, are caught between separatist bombs and state-sanctioned disappearances. The BLA's resurgence, marked by train ambushes and school bus bombings, thrives on the vacuum left by economic neglect and political marginalization. Yet the land itself is plundered; gas pipelines siphon wealth to Punjab, Saudi and Canadian firms extract copper under army guard, and the sands of Chagai, where Pakistan detonated its

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first nuclear device, now hide uranium for sale to the highest bidder. The state's answer is not reconciliation but repression: a nincompoop Field Marshal silencing dissent, as young activist Saddam Tareen condemns the "expendability" of Baloch and Pashtun lives. The military's "crushing of resistance" mirrors its response to Peshawar; a cycle of violence where children are collateral in a war for power, not peace.

The risks are existential. A military entrenched in power, answerable only to itself, turns schools into battlegrounds and citizens into enemies. The jailed Prime Minister Imran Khan, once a pawn of the establishment, now its prisoner, symbolizes the absurdity: a nation held hostage by rogue generals who serve foreign masters while masquerading as patriots. The U.S., China, and Saudi Arabia may fund these generals, but their loyalty is transactional, their morals malleable. They are middlemen in a global bazaar; brokering Afghan peace deals for Washington, safeguarding Chinese mines with death squads, and auctioning Gilgit's gemstones to Dubai traders, all while IMF austerity starves the provinces. As the Khuzdar father mourns, "Who could do this?" the answer lies not in India's shadows but in Rawalpindi's boardrooms, where deals are struck over the corpses of children.

Pakistan stands at a precipice, its soul eroded by the very institution sworn to protect it. The APS and Khuzdar massacres are not anomalies but symptoms of a malignancy; a state that cannibalizes its young

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to sustain the generals' hegemony. The same hands that sign contracts for Waziristan's peridot and Swat's emeralds; minerals now flowing to global markets under military escort, are stained with the blood of schoolchildren. The world may look away, but the bloodstains on school uniforms demand reckoning. Until power returns to the people, until the military's impunity shatters, Pakistan will remain a funeral procession without end, its children forever trapped between the crossfire of external blame and internal betrayal. The light extinguished in Peshawar and Khuzdar will haunt not just parents but a nation complicit in its own unraveling. For in these tragedies, we see not the failure of security, but the triumph of a monstrous truth: in Pakistan, even innocence is a casualty of war.

TAIL PIECE: Shared confessional statement by Mudasar Iqbal lays bare the specter of an enemy festering within. The post 9/11 era has witnessed a calculated doctrinal shift within the military: a transformation not of defense, but of subjugation. Once a bastion of national sovereignty, the institution has been methodically reshaped into a mercenary force, its purpose distilled to a singular, grim mandate: to stalk, to shoot, and to slaughter its own citizens. This grotesque metamorphosis is no accident; it is the handiwork of a compromised officer class and intelligence apparatus, their loyalties bartered, selection criteria and standards altered, promotions to higher ranks purposefully manipulated, and their curricula and training modules meticulously engineered to erode the

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military's foundational ethos.

The alteration of doctrine serves a darker design: one that aligns seamlessly with the hegemonic ambitions of the United States and India. The bloodshed unleashed upon peaceful Pakistani protesters in D-Chowk on the night of 26–27 November 2024 was no aberration. It was the inevitable culmination of this insidious reprogramming: a force no longer bound by duty to protect, but conditioned to execute the West's protracted agenda. These soldiers... yes the same old sons of Pakistani mothers, now turn their rifles inward, their allegiance pledged to destruction.

Here's Dr Azzam Tamimi, talking of the predicament of Arab world and their militaries. Interestingly, his views equally apply to Pakistan's military commanded by the mercenary generals. Nevertheless Dr Tamimi didn't actually miss Pakistan as he actually mentioned Colonial Armies in his talk.

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Epilogue

The dust, as always, settles. It coats the rubble of classrooms, fills the fresh-turned earth of Waziristan, and glazes the eyes of fathers holding empty uniforms. The sirens fade, the headlines pivot, the geopolitical analysts move their pins on the map. A terrible quiet returns, broken only by the sound of a mother's breath catching in the dark... a sound too faint for history books, too intimate for state archives.

We are left with the aftermath, which is not an end but a suspended sentence. The architects have already written their version of events. In their ledgers, the children are transformed into "collateral," "militant adjacents," or the tragic cost of "national security." Their blood is abstracted into policy, their memory buried beneath denial.

The true epilogue is written in the lived reality of the survivors, and in the chilling institutional metamorphosis that made it all inevitable. The post-9/11 era witnessed a calculated doctrinal shift: the methodical

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reshaping of a national military into a mercenary force. Its new, grim mandate was distilled to stalk, shoot, and slaughter its own citizens. This was no accident, but the handiwork of a compromised officer class, their loyalties bartered, their training engineered to erase the ethos of protection. The bloodshed in D-Chowk, the whispers of orders given in APS corridors, are the culmination of this insidious reprogramming. A force now conditioned to execute a protracted agenda, its rifles turned permanently inward.

Yet, against this monumental, monetized darkness, there remains a force no ledger can quantify: the memory held by a mother. She knows the exact weight of her child. She remembers the shade of his laughter. This memory is a sovereignty that cannot be annexed. The mercenary general may die warm in his bed, but he will never know the weight of what he has taken. The mother, bearing that eternal weight, holds the only ledger that matters.

Thus, the lament cycles. The haunting question: *When will it end?* echoes into a

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void. The answer is etched in the flight patterns of returning Reapers and in the cold algebra of power that finds a child's life cheaper than a shift in control. The unmourned of yesterday father the unmourned of tomorrow.

The final, devastating truth lies not in the explosion, but in the silence that follows... a silence that is not peace, but the sound of a nation becoming accustomed to the taste of its own blood, served to it by its own, repurposed hands.

Concluded.

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